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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the relationship between social participation and family structure. A theory is developed in the framework of George Herbert Mead's analysis on the development of a consistent self in response to a generalized other. According to this theory, the influence of the family is implicated as one of the social-psychological dynamics which encourages social participation. The theory was tested using data collected from a population of high school students. Results of the study indicated that family integration is more closely associated with social participation than is the strength of the parent-child relationship. Close relationships were not found to be in themselves predictive of participation in school social activities. Rather, students who perceived their families as well-integrated, that is, having roles, norms and goals, were those who took part in social activities and events. The theoretical reasons suggested by Durkheim and Mead suggest that the structure of the family is important in learning how to participate in other social groups. The data from this study suggest that the integrated family provides the structure of Mead's 'generalized other'. (Author/GC)

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FAMILY INFLUENCE ON TEENAGE PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES*

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ABSTRACT

This paper develops a theory in the meadian framework, which explains one aspect of the social-psychological dynamics which encourage social participation. This theory is then tested using data collected from a population of high school students. It was found that students who perceived their families as well-integrated, that is as having roles, norms and goals, are students who participate in high school social activities. This result was found even though close relationships with parents were not associated with participation in social activities.

FAMILY INFLUENCE ON TEENAGE PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

The research reported in this paper is concerned with the relationship between social participation and the family structure. While a great deal of resarch has been done on the impact of participation on the society and on the individual, there is little research which deals with predicting who will participate in social activities. Only two structural variables are typically associated with social participation. The first such variable is social class. A variety of researchers have quite consistently found that the higher the social class the more frequent the social participation (Bell and Force, 1956; Freeman, Novak and Reeder, 1957; Wright and Hyman, 1958). The second variable associated with social participation is family participation. Durkheim (1951:211) notes in his discussion of egoism that participation in the family group creates in the individual the sentiments of sympathy and social solidarity which draw him toward others. Society becomes necessary to the individual and he becomes sociable. If a person lives outside of an integrated family situation, that person develops fewer sentiments for others, is less penetrated by the need to be sociable and is therefore more willing to be isolated (1951:215). Dager (1964:75) also predicts that if close family ties do not occur a person will learn to rely only on self. And Booth (1972:190) has found that in every case, men and women with rich kin resources report rich interpersonal resources in other areas. They have more ties to the community both in voluntary organizations and in informal friendships.

The analysis done by George Herbert Mead on the development of a

consistent self in response to a generalized other suggests a theoretical reason for the observed association between the family and social participation. Mead (1934:140) has defined a self as that which can be an object to itself. The individual imagines the responses others will make to his behavior. He then directs his own behavior to the expected responses of those others. As Mead points out, this requires that the individual take the role of others. At first this role-taking process is carried out by taking the role of only one other, a process which Mead compares to play. When the child takes the role of one other, the child responds to the immediate stimuli from that other (1934:152). But the child, taking the role of one person at a time and responding to that one person in his imagination, does not develop an integrated self.

Eventually the role-taking process is carried out with a generalized other, a process which Mead compares to the game. The child must take the roles of all the others in the game, he must take into account the rules governing the acts of those others, and he must also take into account the different social projects which the group is carrying out (1934:155). He must respond to the entire complexity of the situation rather than to one other person. The self most frequently is object to a complex social situation where a variety of roles are regulated by the social norms of the group, and where social behavior is judged by the goals of the group. It is the group of people perceived as acting together which we refer to as the generalized other. While occasionally the actor takes the role of only one other, she must usually respond to the generalized other.

Mead stressed that the generalized other must have roles, it must

have norms integrating the roles, and it must have commonly understood group projects. A family background with roles, with norms and with group projects would provide the child with the opportunity to interact with a generalized other. Where family behavior appears to be impulsive rather than structured, where norms are not clearly discernable, and where group projects are either non-existent or not attainable, the child cannot learn from the family how to interact with a generalized other.

Learning to interact with the family as generlized other should facilitate such interaction with other groups. If the family cannot be recognized as a generalized other, it would be more difficult to learn to see other groups as a unified generalized other. This suggests that the child who learns to interact with the family as a generalized other will find it easier to interact with other groups than will the child who has not had such a family experience.

Mead's discussion of the generalized other suggests the following assumptions about the family in relation to social participation. First, the family is normally the first "generalized other" of the child. Second, the family that has the necessary integration of roles, norms and goals, will give the child the opportunity to develop a generalized other. And third, the child socialized in such a family will be better able to participate socially outside the family.

These assumptions and the hypothesis derived from them are stated more formally as follows:

Definition 1: The family that has integrated roles, norms and goals is an integrated family.

Assumption 1: The integrated family will give the child the opportunity to develop a generalized other in the family.

Assumption 2: The child who has developed a generalized other in the family will be better able to participate socially outside the family.

Assumption 3: The ability to participate socially outside the family leads to a higher rate of such participation.

Hypothesis 1: Family integration is positively associated with social participation.

METHODOLOGY

The data used in this project were collected from two high schools in East Chicago, Indiana. A questionnaire was administered to the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades of the sample schools in four mass testing situations. Every possible effort was made to reach each student enrolled in the schools, resulting in a 98 per cent response rate. A total of 1966 usuable questionnaires were obtained. Of these, 128 respondents were new residents. The researchers presumed there would not have been time for these students to establish full participation because of their mobility, so these respondents were deleted from the population, leaving a total of 1868 cases. The population studied is working class and is balanced racially. Approximated 35 per cent of the students are white, 35 per cent are black and 30 per cent are Latin. Thus no one in the group should fail to participate solely on the basis of being isolated racially.

Measures of Social Participation

In the questionnaire the students were asked how often they dated, how many clubs they belonged to in school, how many clubs they belonged to outside of school, and how often they attended sports events. These serve as four indicators of participation. Students were also asked to name their friends and three types of data were derived from this information. First was a count of the number of friends named by each respondent, second was a count of the number of times the respondent was named by others, and third was the number of reciprocal friends, that is, the number of times respondent was named by those that he or she named.

Each of these seven measures is used in the analysis as a separate measure of participation. In addition, five measures which are not correlated were used to develop an index of Participation for each individual. These five items are dating, joining clubs in school, joining clubs out of school, attending sports events and being named by at least one person as a friend. The items were weighted equally and summed to develop the index. This index serves as the eighth measure of participation and reflects the variety of participation rather than the type of participation.

Measure of Family Integration

The family integration measure used in this research was based on the concept of social integration as formulated in social structural theory. The set of ten items in the family integration measure were based on a review of the literature which specified aspects necessary to family integration. The first statement reads "In my family we celebrate birthdays and some other holidays" and is directed at ritual in the

family. The second statement reads "In my family we all know what is expected of us," the third statement reads "In my family there is a great deal of fighting and tension" and the fourth statement reads "In my family nothing ever seems to get done right." These statements reflect the existence of norms and functions. The next five statements reflect interpersonal integration and read as follows: "In my family we help each other whenever we can." "In my family we all care about each other." "In my family we tell each other what our plans are." "In my family we stick up for each other when something goes wrong." Item ten "Ours is a happy family" is a summary statement which should reflect the overall feeling about the integration of the family.

Scoring of the family integration measure was done by summing responses to the ten items. The response alternative provided for each item in the scale - all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, and none of the time - were arbitrarily weighted and summed. The scores range from 14 to 40, with a mean and median of 30 and a standard deviation of 4.7.

In addition to the family integration index, an identification index was used to determine whether close relationships with one or both parents would be associated with social participation. Items in this measure asked the students if they were helped or influenced by their parents, if they were similar to their parents, if they were close to their parents, and if they admire their parents. Five items were constructed with each of the above elements in a separate question. The first question, for example read as follows: "Think of all the important things in your life. Considering all of these things, would you say that

the following people help you very much to get these important things, help you, help you a little, or don't help you at all?" "Father" and "Mother" were among those listed in the response set. Weights of 4 through 1 were arbitrarily assigned to the responses and then summed.

FINDINGS

The mean social participation scores were computed for high and low levels of family integration. It was found that in every measure of social participation, the mean participation score is higher for respondents scoring high on family integration than for those scoring low on family integration. A summary of this relationship is given in Table 1. The difference in the means is significant in every case except in the "number of times named" by others as friend. These findings demonstrate that membership in an integrated family group is associated with social participation in groups outside the family.

Mean participation scores for each sex and by identification with each parent are shown in Tables 2 and 3. When we control for family integration, the relationship between parental identification and social participation is not significant in almost every case. An analysis of variance shows that there is no interaction affect between these two variables. The significant variable is family integration and not identification with the individual parent. The fact that identification is not consistently related to social participation lends weight to our theoretical perspective that it is the structural aspects of the group that have a consistent influence on social participation.

DISCUSSION

This research project was designed to facilitate a better understanding of the relationship between family integration and social participation. Family background variables, it was suggested, would be positively related to social participation.

We have found that family background is indeed related to social participation. The measure of family integration is consistently and significantly related to all of the measures of social participation. We can with confidence conclude that a positive perception of the family as a group is associated with social participation.

Our results also suggest that family integration is more closely associated with social participation than is the strength of the parent-child relationship. The theoretical reasons intimated by Durkheim and by Mead suggest that the structure of the family is important in learning how to participate in other social groups. Durkheim treated social participation and its inverse, social isolation, as behavior which is learned in the social group. He argued that dependence on social solidarity is learned in a well-structured social group. Mead also suggests that the structure of the group is important in learning group participation. Mead deals specifically with the different role-taking processes associated with interaction between individuals and interaction between the individual and the group. His discussion of the generalized other points out the necessity of learning how to interact with a group as a group. The individual must learn to take the role of the generalized other rather than the role of individual others in order

to participate socially.

Our data suggest that the integrated family provides the structure of a generalized other. A family which is perceived as having norms and goals is a family that is associated with participation in school activities in this population.

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TABLE 1: MEAN PARTICIPATION SCORES IN LOW AND HIGH INTEGRATED FAMILIES

N = 1868 BOYS = 954 Girls = 914

ACTIVITY	LOW FAMILY INTEGRATION	HIGH FAMILY INTEGRATION	P
MEAN DATING SCORE, Total	2.63	2.79	**
Boys	2.54	2.84	**
Girls	2.73	2.72	
NUMBER OF CLUBS IN SCHOOL, Total	.87	1.03	**
Boys	.83	1.00	**
Girls	.91	1.06	
CLUBS OUT OF SCHOOL, Total	.67	.85	**
Boys	.65	.73	
Girls	.69	.93	**
SPORTS EVENTS SCORE, Total	2.54	2.61	**
Boys	2.60	2.60	
Girls	2.46	2.62	**
NUMBER OF FRIENDS NAMED, Total	5.11	5.35	**
Boys	4.88	5.19	**
Girls	5.38	5.50	
TIMES NAMED BY OTHERS, Total	3.17	3.31	
Boys	3.02	2.96	
Girls	3.35	3.63	
RECIPROCAL FRIENDS, Total	1.39	1.53	**
Boys	1.12	1.22	
Girls	1.69	1.82	
MEAN INDEX SCORE, Total	2.98	3.28	**
Boys	2.96	3.26	**
Girls	2.99	3.30	**

** Student's t is significant at .05 level or less.

TABLE 2: BOYS' MEAN PARTICIPATION SCORES BY LOW AND HIGH IDENTIFICATION WITH PARENTS AND BY LEVEL OF FAMILY INTEGRATION (FI)

ACTIVITY	IDENTIFICATION WITH FATHER			IDENTIFICATION WITH MOTHER		
	Low N=478		High N=454	Low N=478		High N=454
MEAN DATING SCORE						
Low FI	2.56		2.50	2.68	**	2.30
High FI	2.88		2.80	2.86		2.80
NUMBER OF CLUBS IN SCHOOL						
Low FI	.81		.88	.87		.79
High FI	.89		1.07	.85	**	1.07
CLUBS OUT OF SCHOOL						
Low FI	.58	**	.77	.66		.64
High FI	.71		.80	.65		.82
SPORTS EVENTS SCORE						
Low FI	2.58		2.62	2.61		2.60
High FI	2.61		2.58	2.53		2.64
NUMBER OF FRIENDS NAMED						
Low FI	4.76	**	5.13	4.79		5.03
High FI	5.28		5.18	5.23		5.17
TIMES NAMED BY OTHERS						
Low FI	2.90		3.18	3.04		2.98
High FI	3.00		2.95	3.20		2.81
RECIPROCAL FRIENDS						
Low FI	1.06		1.22	1.10		1.14
High FI	1.35		1.16	1.26		1.20
MEAN INDEX SCORE						
Low FI	2.92		3.00	3.05		2.84
High FI	3.20		3.28	3.10		3.33

** F is significant at .05 or less

TABLE 3: GIRLS' MEAN PARTICIPATION SCORES BY LOW AND HIGH IDENTIFICATION WITH PARENTS AND BY LEVEL OF FAMILY INTEGRATION (FI)

ACTIVITY	IDENTIFICATION WITH FATHER		IDENTIFICATION WITH MOTHER	
	Low N=415	High N=486	Low N=415	High N=486
MEAN DATING SCORE				
Low FI	2.75	2.68	2.73	2.72
High FI	2.83	2.55	2.64	2.79
NUMBER OF CLUBS IN SCHOOL				
Low FI	.92	.94	.95	.86
High FI	1.00	1.16	1.08	1.06
CLUBS OUT OF SCHOOL				
Low FI	.70	.68	.71	.69
High FI	.88	.99	.81	.98
SPORTS EVENTS SCORE				
Low FI	2.44	2.55	2.47	2.47
High FI	2.61	2.64	2.61	2.63
NUMBER OF FRIENDS NAMED				
Low FI	5.30	5.64	5.30	5.52
High FI	5.53	5.49	5.45	5.52
TIMES NAMED BY OTHERS				
Low FI	3.27	3.69	3.14 **	3.71
High FI	3.66	3.61	3.53	3.68
RECIPROCAL FRIENDS				
Low FI	1.63 **	1.99	1.59	1.85
High FI	1.88	1.77	1.81	1.84
MEAN INDEX SCORE				
Low FI	2.95	3.20	3.01	2.98
High FI	3.27	3.35	3.21	3.35

** F is significant at .05 or less